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(47) 25X1



25 August 1966

No. 1687/66

Copy No.

## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

VIET CONG ANTI-ELECTION ACTIVITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM

State Dept. review completed

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
25 August 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Viet Cong Antielection Activity  
in South Vietnam

Summary

the Communists are planning a major effort to sabotage the upcoming election of delegates to the South Vietnamese National Constituent Assembly. Other reports indicate that the Communists have already carried out a number of minor antielection actions, including warnings to the populace against voting, the seizure of voter identification cards, and the generation of an environment of terror designed to deter the electorate from going to the polls.

These reports, coupled with ominous denunciations of the election in the propaganda of the National Liberation Front and its subordinate organizations, suggest that the Communists do, in fact, hope to foil the government's efforts to turn out a significantly large segment of the approximately five million registered voters for the elections. In some areas, they may be able to exploit or operate under the guise of Buddhist opposition to the election. The tempo of terrorism and violence is fully expected to increase in the last few days before the vote takes place.

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### The General Situation

1. The national elections appear to have taken on the aspect of a significant political challenge to the Viet Cong. Consequently, their efforts to sabotage it will probably be more intense than those they made against the local and provincial council elections of 1965, or against the more rigidly controlled elections of the Diem era. The Viet Cong outlook on the September elections becomes more understandable when it is recalled that Premier Ky has expressed the view that the elections will be a test of the people's acceptance of his government, a view that in part explains the intense efforts of the government to get voters registered and to the polls on 11 September.

2. Hanoi, predictably, denounced the elections shortly after they were arranged. The first blast emanating from the North was on 16 April in the form of an article in the official party journal Nhan Dan. The earliest known diatribe against the proposed elections by the Liberation Front Radio in the South came on 18 April. During the past month, the frequency of Communist antielection broadcasts has increased in tempo and stridency. The strongest Communist challenge to date was voiced by the Liberation Radio on 21 August, when it broadcast a communiqué of the "Liberation Armed Forces" in the Saigon - Gia Dinh area that directly threatened the lives of candidates, election workers, and agencies attempting to get the people to vote. This warning has also been echoed by Hanoi Radio.

3. Communist antielection plans and actions as reported in each corps zone are discussed below:

#### I Corps Tactical Zone

4. The I Corps zone has apparently witnessed more intense efforts by the Viet Cong to interfere with the national constituent elections than any other region of the country so far.

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effort reportedly will range from propaganda harangues to terrorist attacks on the polling places. Military actions aimed at diverting government security arrangements for the election are reportedly also planned.

5. Two acts of terrorism that have already occurred in I Corps may be directly linked to the elections. The first, on 16 July, was an attack on the headquarters in Quang Tin Province of the locally important Vietnam Nationalist Party (VNQDD). The provincial VNQDD chief, a leading contender for one of the province's three constituent assembly seats, was seriously wounded in the attack. The second anti-election incident occurred in Hue on 18 August. On this occasion, the Viet Cong detonated a bomb at a government "carnival" held partly to publicize the election and get out the vote. Twenty-six persons were killed in this incident.

6. Reports [ ] from I Corps have told of the massing of troops to assist in disrupting elections, the planned introduction of terrorist teams into urban areas such as Da Nang, and the formation of teams to assassinate candidates. One report states, however, that Viet Cong actions have so far not had any discernible effect on the urban and rural population, at least in the Da Nang area. Police and other government forces in Da Nang are believed to be adequate to handle Viet Cong terrorist activity, but an upsurge of military action or a concerted antielection effort by both the Viet Cong and the Buddhists might overtax their capabilities.

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## II Corps Tactical Zone

7. Reports of Viet Cong activity to discredit the election in II Corps have been fewer and more tenuous. Reports of Communist antielection planning have been received from Kontum, Khanh Hoa, and Binh Thuan provinces, but Viet Cong actions to date have been largely confined to propaganda. [ ]

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[ ] speak of Viet Cong plans to attack polling places, candidates, and officials, and to sabotage transportation routes. Near the city of Da Lat in Tuyen Duc Province, voter cards, voting lists, and other documents were destroyed in the

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burning of a village office on 19 August. In Khanh Hoa Province on 20 August, two Viet Cong squads penetrated three separate hamlets and exhorted inhabitants to boycott the election. The US Embassy also has reports of an intensive effort to propagandize and intimidate montagnards in the highlands area.

### III Corps Tactical Zone

8. There have been relatively few reports so far from III Corps of Viet Cong efforts to sabotage the forthcoming election. The main thrust of the activity in this zone has been in the form of Liberation Front broadcasts.

9. However, reports have been received dealing with elaborate plans of the Communists to sabotage election efforts in Saigon. These Communist plans reportedly include the assignment of assassination squads to the city to strike at GVN officials--particularly in the National Police--and at precinct chiefs and heads of family groups. Plans are also said to have been made for strikes, demonstrations, and attacks on security forces breaking up Viet Cong - inspired demonstrations. Sabotage activities in the heart of the city are rumored likely to be touched off in the days immediately preceding the election in an effort to cause confusion and anxiety and adversely affect the voter turnout.

10. Premier Ky recently expressed to Ambassador Lodge his concern about the possibility of 100- to 200-man Viet Cong assassination teams that may strike at GVN and American officials. Ky disclosed that he had ordered a more intensive combing of the city to round up possible Viet Cong infiltrators. Recent unverified reports that some 200 suspects have been rounded up in Saigon may be a reflection of a more intensive security effort.

11. In the other parts of III Corps, only scattered reports from Tay Ninh and Long An provinces have so far been received concerning Viet Cong antielection intentions. In no instance did the alleged Viet Cong plans go beyond harassment actions of a relatively minor type.

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#### IV Corps Tactical Zone

12. Reports have been received from ten of the 15 provinces in IV Corps concerning Viet Cong plans or actions to disrupt the election. The plans appear similar to those in other regions, including harassment of voters, intimidation of candidates, destruction of polling places, and severance of communication lines to polling places. The overt actions most frequently reported to date are propaganda harangues and seizures or attempts to seize voter cards.

13. In the days immediately preceding the election, the Viet Cong are widely expected to interdict roads and canals providing access from rural areas to polling places in district towns or village centers. In some cases, boat owners have already been warned by the Viet Cong not to transport voters to the polls.

14. In the delta region, there appears to be widespread popular apathy regarding the elections. Some of this attitude may be attributable to the Viet Cong threats, although in many cases the people do not see any tangible benefit for themselves in the election. There are also some indications that a few GVN officials--some of whom view the elections cynically--may be playing up the dangers of Viet Cong disruptions as a hedge against a poor voter turnout in their areas. This observation was made about officials in Chuong Thien Province and may apply elsewhere in the delta.

#### The Election and VC Activity in General

15. Indications of a gradual rise in the level of Viet Cong - initiated activity in South Vietnam during the period 13 to 20 August--even though still considerably below the 1966 weekly average--may signal the beginning of a determined Communist effort to disrupt the elections.

16. During the first two weeks of August, the enemy incident count declined to the lowest levels thus far noted in 1964: 534 and 426 incidents, respectively, compared to a weekly incident average of nearly 800 during the first seven months of the

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year. Acts of terrorism in particular had been declining since early July--when there were 39 in the week of 2 to 9 July--to a low of nine during the period 7 to 13 August. Incidents of minor harassment, sabotage, and propaganda had similarly dropped during the six-week period, and there was nearly a total absence of battalion-size or larger attacks.

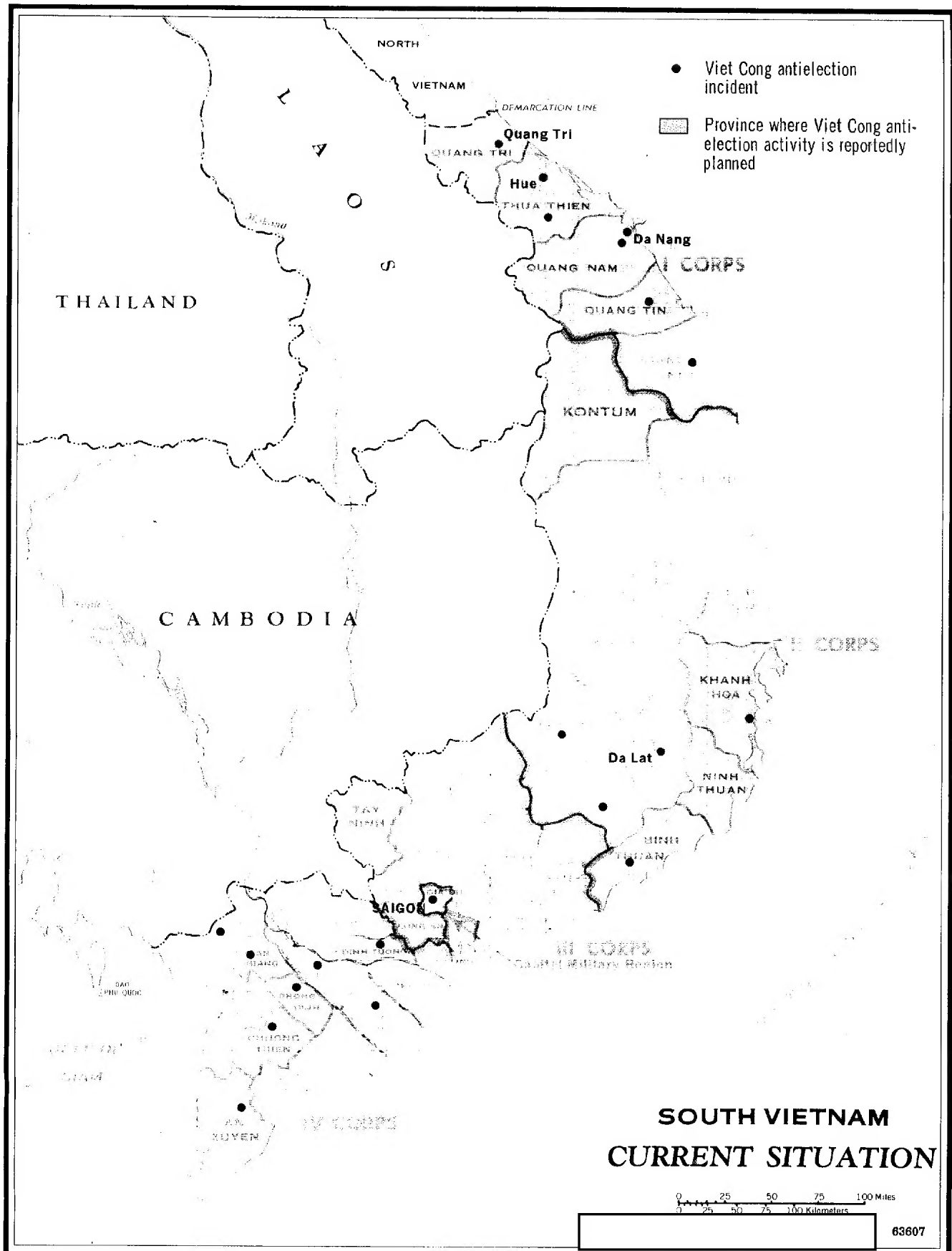
17. This reduction of Communist activity this summer was probably due to allied spoiling operations and monsoon weather rather than to specific factors on the South Vietnamese political scene. However, the stepup in Viet Cong activity during the week of 13 to 20 August--involving an increase of some 130 incidents over the previous week, a number of dramatic acts of terrorism and harassment, and a sharp increase in attacks and ambushes from nine to 18 including two of battalion and one of company size--appears designed to set an atmosphere of tension and fear in advance of the election. The fact that 11 of these assaults occurred in III Corps--eight in Gia Dinh Province, which surrounds the Saigon metropolitan area--further suggests an effort to heighten psychological pressure on the voting population in secured areas.

18. In the Capital Special Zone, on balance, it appears that the Viet Cong have the capability to effect a considerable disruption of the elections, primarily in rural areas. Should they choose to make a substantial effort in the Saigon area, however, the Viet Cong have the capability to mount military operations with up to seven battalions of the 165 "A" Regiment supported by local force units. In the immediate Saigon-Cholon - Gia Dinh area, Viet Cong forces can conduct harassing and terrorist actions with elements of the F-100 sapper units. Additionally, they can probably infiltrate personnel of the 165 "A" Regiment under legal cover as a standby force to take advantage of any political unrest during the 11 September pre-election period. (See Map)

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25 August 1966

Mr. Robert Komer  
Special Assistant to the President  
for Vietnam Affairs  
White House

Bob:

This memo was prepared in response to your request to George Carver. Personal copies will be sent to Rostow, Moyers, Jorden, Bundy, Unger, MacNaughton and Kaplan. It will also receive routine dissemination.

Similar reports will be made weekly until the elections.

E. DREXEL GODFREY, JR.  
Director of Current Intelligence  
Central Intelligence Agency

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Next 9 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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OCI Registry: FIRST COURIER

One copy each of the memo "Viet Cong Anti-Election Activity in South Vietnam" is to go personally to the following men on the first courier run:

#176- Mr. Walt Rostow - White House

177- Jorden

178- Bundy (W)

179- Unger

180 Kaplan (Harold)

182- 181 Moyers

*Mr. Naughton*

Unnumbered copy for Mr. Robert Komer was delivered this evening by courier with note attached from D/OCI.

Balance of memo will be given regular routine dissem to recipients of Vietnam Weekly at OOB 26 August.

(per  for D/OCI)

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Talking Paper for: "Viet Cong Antielection Activity in South Vietnam"

This paper was requested by the office of Robert Komer, the President's special assistant on Vietnam affairs.

The memorandum cites evidence, including public statements, that the Viet Cong intend to make a major effort to disrupt South Vietnam's constituent assembly election on 11 September. It summarizes Viet Cong harassing actions against the elections to date, as well as reports so far received concerning planned Communist activities in the coming weeks. Recent military trends that support such an intention by the Communists are also discussed.

Routine internal and external dissemination is suggested in addition to dissemination to the stipulated recipients in the White House and the State Department.

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